

Best Practices Approach Initiative

History and Purpose

The Juvenile Accountability Block Grants (JABG) Program, administered at the federal level by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), supports state and local efforts to reduce juvenile crime through programs that focus on offender accountability (Public Law 107-273). As California's administering agency for this federally funded program, the Corrections Standards Authority (CSA) distributes: a) annual allocations to those localities meeting the federal funding threshold to receive direct allocations, and b) discretionary funds for projects addressing juvenile offender accountability.

The CSA assumed responsibility for administering California's federal JABG Program in January 2004. The goal of this program is to reduce juvenile offending through accountability-based initiatives that focus on both the offender and the juvenile justice system. JABG funds are used to assist local units of government that serve youth up to 18 years old. To comply with JABG guidelines, CSA also collaborates with the chief of the highest court in the State through the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in California.

On March 19, 2009 the State Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (SACJJDP), which oversees the use of JABG funds, recommended to the CSA Board that approximately \$1.7 million of federal JABG funds be used to support the use of evidence-based practices (EBP), one of five priority areas identified in their Strategic Plan. As a result, JABG funds were set aside to support the **Best Practices Approach Initiative** (BPAI) to provide training and technical assistance to juvenile justice agencies statewide in the implementation of evidence-based practices, programs and principles over the course of a three-year project period.

Evidence-based practices, programs and principles are examples of "best practices," which intend using the most up-to-date knowledge in an area of concern – in this case, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention.

Using EBP (i.e., research-based and proven programs to address the issues of juvenile offending and correction) within the context of best practices involves the following:

1. Organizational development to create a culture that is accepting of best practices and evidence-based approaches;
2. The development of collaborations oriented to best practices and evidence-based approaches within the juvenile justice system;
3. The use of validated risk/needs assessment tools to determine corrections and rehabilitation case planning;
4. The use of evidence-based practices and programs to produce positive criminal justice and juvenile rehabilitative and developmental outcomes;
5. Data collection and analysis to monitor program processes and outcomes;

6. Performance management and improvement of programs and practices;
7. Quality assurance assessments to ensure fidelity to proven models and adherence to standards of care; and
8. A focus on sustainability to ensure continuation of successful programs and practices after the termination of outside funding.

On March 26 2009, the CSA Board authorized establishment of an Executive Steering Committee (ESC) of statewide subject matter experts to oversee the development of the BPAI. The ESC developed the evaluation process and criteria by which a vendor with expertise in best practice approaches was identified through a Request for Proposal. The vendor selected through this competitive process was Assessments.com. The ESC also recommended that the AOC partner with Assessments.com to support inclusion of the courts and other court partners in this initiative.

The scope of work developed by the ESC for the BPAI contains numerous deliverables that can be captured in **four primary objectives**:

1. Determine the juvenile justice system's state of progress in implementing EBP, develop web-based resources to facilitate counties sharing information about best practices, and provide a medium to announce their advancements in achieving key EBP performance outcome measures;
2. Provide statewide regional trainings on EBP and best practices to probation departments, judges and other stakeholders in the juvenile justice system;
3. Direct approximately two-thirds of the grant funding to provide organizational development and technical assistance services to three local juvenile justice systems, which includes the probation department, juvenile court partners, and their community stakeholders. This intensive, on the ground technical assistance and training will support each probation department and judicial community selected in implementing or enhancing the systems change needed to ensure a successful transition to an evidence-based approach; and
4. Develop a plan to help juvenile probation engage the courts, and other stakeholders in order to sustain these advances in California.

On August 1, 2009 Assessments.com and the AOC began work on the objectives of the BPAI project and these services and activities are currently well underway. On August 13, 2010, through a competitive application process, the ESC selected the three following local juvenile justice jurisdictions to receive technical assistance related to objective three (above).

- Imperial County
- Shasta County
- San Diego County

Contact and Program Information

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